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WORDS & MUSIC  
A  
BOOK  
OF  
BURLESQUES

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MUSIC

BY

SIGMUND SPAETH




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# WORDS AND MUSIC



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# Words & Music

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*A Book of Burlesques*

By SIGMUND SPAETH

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### *DEDICATION*

There is only one person to whom this author dedicates books. Suppose we call her "Katie" this time.



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## PREFACE

THE only possible excuse for this book is that enough people who have heard its material performed in public have asked to have it in print. If only a fair percentage of them really meant what they said, the author will be satisfied.

At every social gathering there comes a time when the hostess looks around anxiously for someone qualified to perform a "stunt," and thus relieve the strain on general conversation, bridge, dancing or the business of eating and drinking. Just to sing a song or play the piano is usually not enough. Our modern party-hounds want something different.

By actual experience it may be argued that the words and music in this book will fill some of the yawning gaps of the average home entertainment. Some of the material figured in the last benefit performance for the Actors' Fund in New York. It requires little preparation, and no equipment except a half-way decent piano.

Any amateur can learn to do these little musical tricks by merely following the instructions, and introducing his own ideas where he pleases. There is no restriction whatever upon such performance. For a professional, public presentation, however, permission should be secured from the author or the publishers.

## PREFACE

These burlesques do not pretend to be very profound studies of musical technique, nor even excruciatingly funny parodies. They have intentionally been made quite obvious, so that a laugh may be encouraged even from those who know very little about music; and while this laugh is their chief object, they aim to suggest also a few points worth remembering in the study of composers and their styles.

If facts are most easily learned in rhyme (as witness the jingles concerning the presidents, the months of the year, etc.) perhaps general tendencies and characteristics may be clarified in the popular form of parody. The reader is permitted to gain as much information from this book as he can find in it, but is asked nevertheless not to take it too seriously.

The variations on "Yankee Doodle" were composed for a ship's concert more than fifteen years ago, and have since been recorded by the author for a reproducing piano (The Ampico). The musical adventures of "Jack and Jill" are more recent, and have figured in many a club program, as well as on the radio. They also have been recorded, phonographically.

"Yes, we have no Bananas" is analyzed in the author's earlier book, "The Common Sense of Music," and appears also in a series distributed by the Herald-Tribune Syndicate. "The Great American Opera" is entirely new.

Jan. 9, 1926.

SIGMUND SPAETH

## INTRODUCTION

**M**Y acquaintance with Sig Spaeth dates from the time when, as an earnest young critic on the now extinct New York Evening Mail, he came to review my early musical experiments in connection with motion pictures. Some years later he entertained my gang and myself, with complete success, at a dinner preliminary to our own entertainment of a Hoboken audience.

Dr. Spaeth has come on to what most of us would call middle age without losing his sense of humor or his appreciation of values. He possesses to-day an almost uncanny sureness of touch not only in his treatment of music, but in his general dispensation of wit and wisdom.

The "words and music" of this book are already familiar to many thousands of his listeners, particularly among the radio fans, and they are worth preserving in this permanent form. I freely admit that one of my few "applause" letters went to their author.

These parodies are something more than mere laugh-producers. They rest upon a foundation of real knowledge, and after one has enjoyed the satire, broad or subtle, as the case may be, there remains a conviction of added information and significantly broadened experience.

Let no one suggest that such a book is unworthy of a

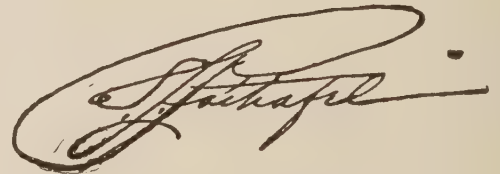
## INTRODUCTION

serious thinker and scholar! We cannot consider ourselves on terms of intimacy with any subject until we are able to laugh at it and at ourselves.

Sigmund Spaeth has grown up with a love of music in his heart, unspoiled by the silly idolatry which refuses to recognize its obviously vulnerable spots. His gentle spoofing is delivered always in the most affectionate tones. Actually such treatment brings more converts to the cause than any amount of austere reverence or forbidding fervency of devotion.

I have a feeling that even people who don't know much about music will like this book. As for those who have even a fair smattering of the art, they are likely to be astonished, convulsed and edified at one and the same time.

If there is a more important influence than that of Sig Spaeth to-day in the direction of musical honesty and common sense, I am not aware of it. Music happens to be one of my hobbies. That is why I am delighted to contribute these introductory words to a book that should prove as useful as it is sure to be popular.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "S. Spaeth".

"Roxy"

THE MUSICAL ADVENTURES  
OF JACK AND JILL



## I.

### THE MUSICAL ADVENTURES OF JACK AND JILL

Could any composer find a text more suitable for a musical setting than the famous poem of "Jack and Jill"? Remind yourself of the words, in their stark, dramatic simplicity:

Jack and Jill  
Went up a hill,  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down,  
And broke his crown,  
And Jill came tumbling after.

Never mind the inconsistency of the rhyme. This is more than drama. It is an epic.

Note the constant action. There is no padding, no waste of words.

Everything is clear and vivid.

Tragedy, idealism, pathos, the human equation, all are contained in these brief lines. The words positively cry out for a musical accompaniment.

### *THE ORATORIO VERSION*

Think of them first in terms of oratorio, the type of music made famous by Handel's "Messiah" and Mendelssohn's "Elijah," dignified, serious, impressive. "Jack and Jill" could well be interpreted as a combination of recitative and

## JACK AND JILL

aria, the recitative telling in advance what is going to happen, and the aria telling what actually did happen.

The simple scale of C major makes a very good melody for the aria, up the key-board and down again, as it should be. Of course the singer must hang on to one syllable as long as his or her breath will hold out, for that is a habit oratorio has.

In interpreting this Handelian trifle, be sure to make the recitative highly dramatic. Sing loudly and distinctly, and don't be afraid to hit the chords hard on the piano.

When you start the scale melody, however, the performance should immediately melt into limpid beauty. About the middle of the scale you can turn to your audience and say, "Beautiful melody, isn't it?" thus adding a touch of intimacy to the proceedings. The aria itself should be sung with subdued fervor. As you mount literally on the word "up," let the voice gradually grow in volume. This will increase your confidence. But on "water," the process should be reversed, with a melancholy diminishing of tone as you descend the scale again. Breathe right after the word "pail" if you want to be sure of getting through the "Water."

A similar effect is possible on the elongated "down," but on "crown" the volume should again gradually increase, with a slight and portentous slowing up as the climax is approached. The final line is broadly epic, and as you descend on the word "after," a suggestion of staccato will inevitably remind your hearers of the probable bumps that Jill took on the way 'down.

Here is the music. If you can't play it yourself, get someone else to do it, and convince yourself of what a fine oratorio singer you would be if you ever had the chance.

# JACK AND JILL

Recit.

Hear ye! Fol-low-ers of false gods! I come to tell the sol-lemn

The musical score is for a recitative piece. It features a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Hear ye! Fol-low-ers of false gods! I come to tell the sol-lemn". The melody is simple and direct, with a final note on a whole note. The accompaniment consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 4/4 time signature. It provides harmonic support with chords and single notes, including a prominent bass line with a low E note in the first measure.

sto-ry of two young mortals that rose to heights and were cast down a-gain!

*rit.*

Interlude (*Voice tacet*)

A musical score for an interlude. The title "Interlude (*Voice tacet*)" is written above the staff. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The top staff contains a single whole note in the first measure, followed by five measures of rests, and then a series of eighth and sixteenth notes in the final two measures. The bottom staff contains a series of chords and single notes across all nine measures, providing a harmonic accompaniment.

Andante

Jack and Jill went up

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Jack and Jill'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a tempo marking 'Andante' above it. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lyrics 'Jack and Jill went up' are written below the staff, with a line indicating the melody continues. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It features a complex accompaniment with many beamed sixteenth notes, creating a rhythmic pattern. The overall style is that of a vintage children's music book.

# JACK AND JILL

a hill, To fetch a pail of

*cresc.* *dim.*

wa - - - - - ter.

*col gva*.....

Jack fell down, And broke his

*f*

crown, And Jill came tum-bling af - - - - - ter

*cresc e rit.*

*col gva*

# JACK AND JILL

## *THE SCHUBERT VERSION*

Franz Schubert would have made a sweetly sentimental song out of "Jack and Jill." He wrote over six hundred altogether, some of them masterpieces and others not so good.

Schubert had the habit of building an accompaniment out of a single pattern, repeated over and over again, merely with an occasional change of key, and often keeping on after the song was actually over. For "Jack and Jill" he could find no better accompaniment figure than that good old tune, "Over the Fence is Out." Let this, accordingly, be the basis of the Schubert version. The opening line of melody will suggest an actual Shakespearian setting by the same composer, and why not?

So far as interpretation is concerned, you are urged to be properly sentimental, and please try to make your voice sound charming. The fundamental figure of the accompaniment should never be overlooked, but do not neglect the beauty of the melodic line. When there is a change of key, pounce upon it.

After the question "Why did they go?" the answer, "To fetch a pail of water" should be made more and more pathetic each time.

"And Jill came tumbling after," with its repetitions, can be sung quite happily up to the final announcement, which should be significantly solemn. Sing the last "after" in a "white" voice, as though you realized the hopelessness of making the average listener realize the tragedy of the situation.

After that, the postlude must continue doggedly, even

## JACK AND JILL

though applause may interrupt. At the close, slow down like a home-coming engine, and play the ultimate phrase in a purely æsthetic fashion, lifting the hands gracefully from the keys after the final chord.

Music, please.

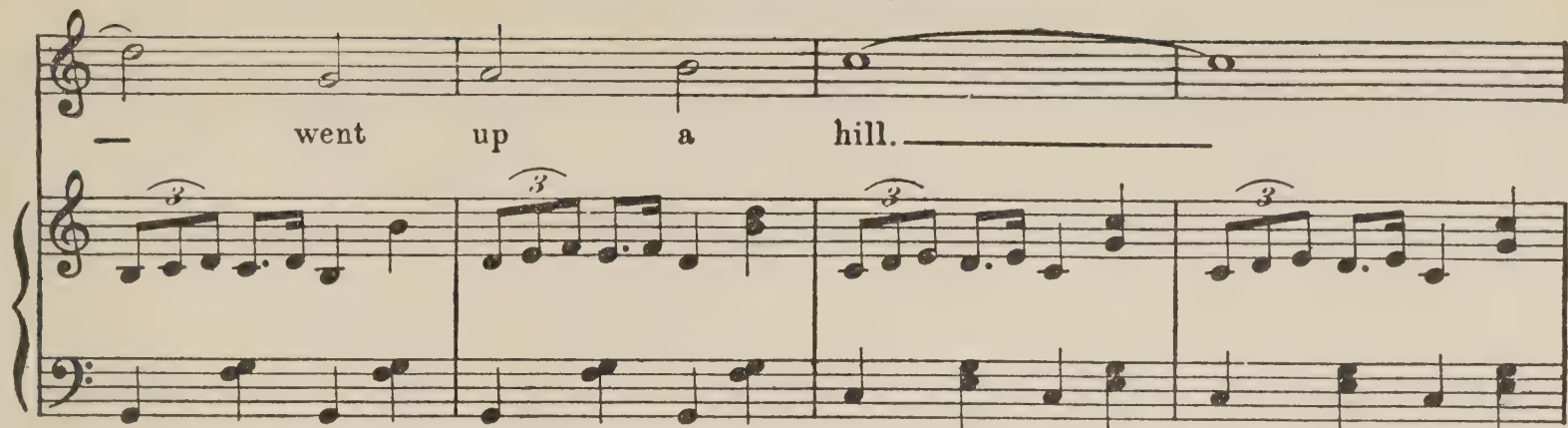
*Allegretto*

The musical score is written for piano and voice. The piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 4/4 time signature. It features a repeating eighth-note triplet pattern in the right hand and a steady quarter-note bass line in the left hand. The vocal part is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are: "Who is Jack? Who is Jill? Those sweet young things, hand in hand,". The score is divided into five systems. The first system shows the piano introduction. The second and third systems contain the vocal lines with piano accompaniment. The fourth and fifth systems continue the vocal line and piano accompaniment, ending with a final chord.

Who is Jack? Who is Jill? Those sweet young things, hand in hand,

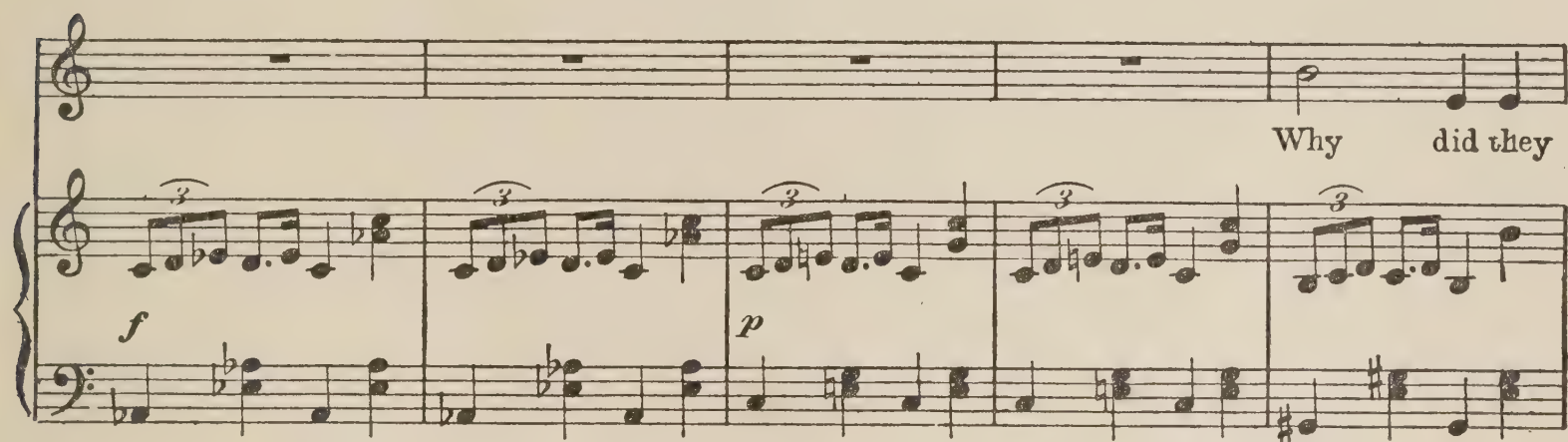
# JACK AND JILL

— went up a hill. —

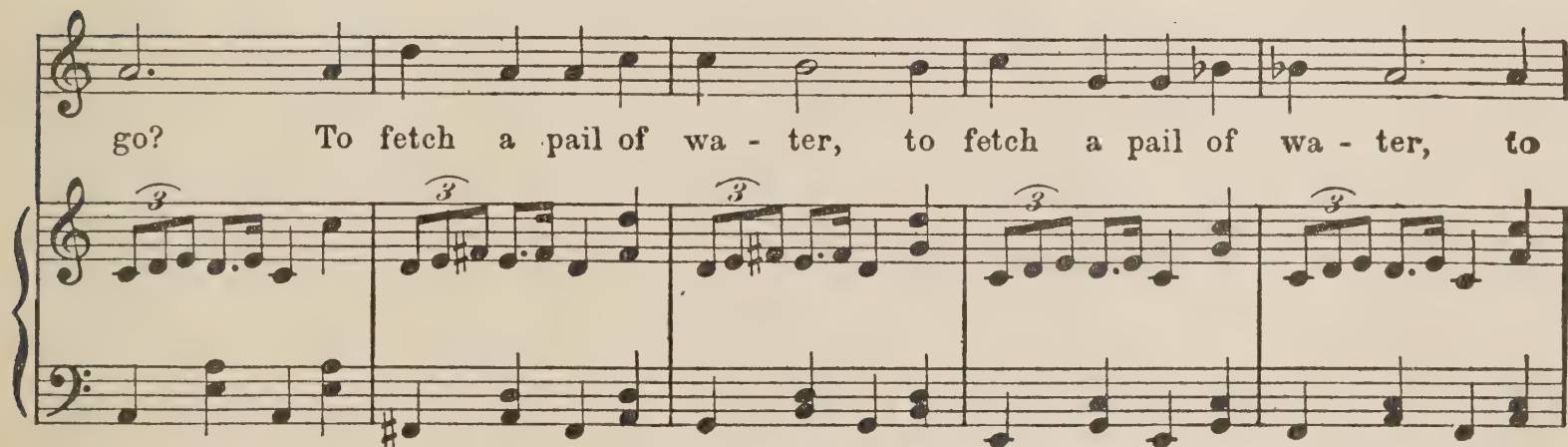


Why did they

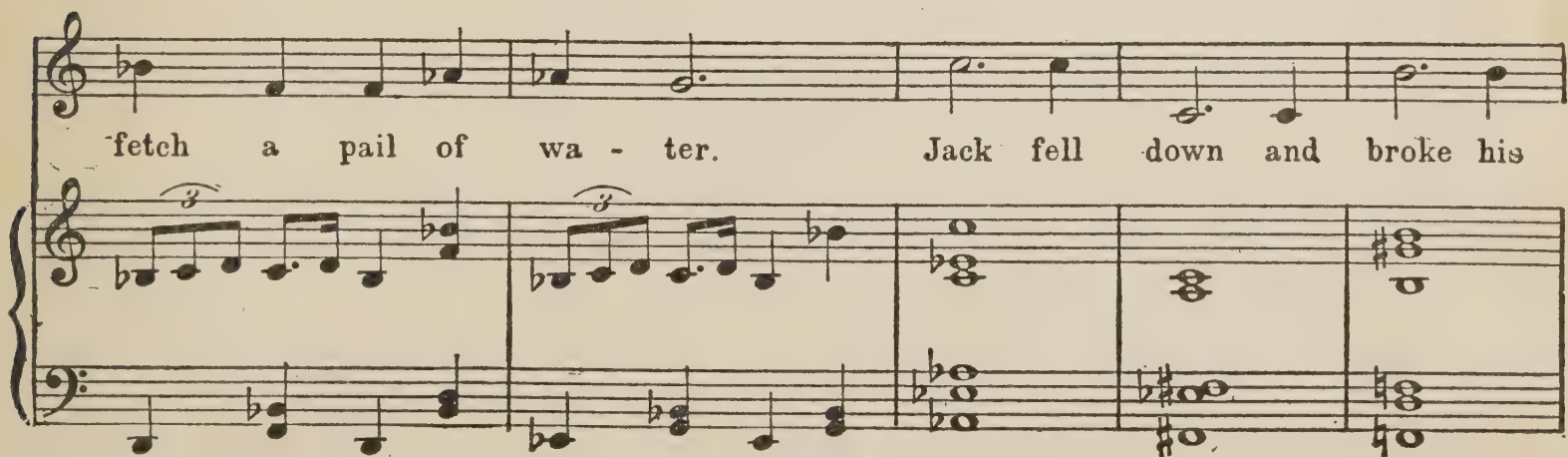
*f* *p*



go? To fetch a pail of wa - ter, to fetch a pail of wa - ter, to



fetch a pail of wa - ter. Jack fell down and broke his



# JACK AND JILL

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics: "crown and Jill came tum - bling af - ter, Jill came tum - bling af - ter". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) begins with a treble clef key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piano part includes the instruction "accel." (accelerando).

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "Jill came tum-bling af - ter, And Jill came tum-bling af - ter." The piano accompaniment includes the instruction "(sostenuto)" and dynamic markings *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). The tempo marking "a tempo" appears above the vocal line.

Third system of the musical score. The piano accompaniment features triplet figures in the right hand, with dynamic markings *f* (forte) and *p* (piano).

Fourth system of the musical score. The piano accompaniment continues with triplet figures and includes dynamic markings *f* (forte), *p* (piano), "dim. e rit." (diminuendo and ritardando), "lento" (slow), and *pp* (pianissimo). The system concludes with a double bar line and a final chord.

## JACK AND JILL

### *THE ITALIAN OPERATIC VERSION*

For the old Italian opera, "Jack and Jill" would really require a sextette for its proper interpretation. You will have to imagine the sextette, particularly when you get to the cadenza, which is sung by the coloratura soprano, accompanied by the flute, and you are probably neither one of those.

The introduction may suggest the actual sextette that the composer had in mind. So far as your Italian accent is concerned, do the best you can, but don't worry. Your hearers will grasp this version with very little effort.

There should be a note of passion in the voice from the very start, as always with the Latins, no matter what they are singing. The repetitions of "dell' aqua" can be made truly tragic, as they often are.

The interlude just before "Giovanni fell dona" should be played with insouciance, and the voice takes it up softly at first, but with gradually increasing volume. Then comes the dramatic climax "E Gilia," followed by a sardonic "Ah."

Before beginning the cadenza, announce "cadenza" in a matter-of-fact tone (which is practically what a prima donna does by her attitude toward her audience). The first arpeggios may be as fragmentary and primitive as you please, but should be accompanied by a wave of the right hand, to indicate that a whole world of notes is implied. Distinguish carefully between the smooth "legato" singing of the first scale on "Ah," and the abrupt, "staccato" character of its repetition. After you have finished your amazing imitation of the flute, start the final trill slowly, with gradually increasing effort and volume, culminating in a grand "tumbling after," fortissimo.

# JACK AND JILL

The written notes are merely a stimulus to your own powers of mimicry.

*Adagio*

O Gio - van - ni, e Gil - ia, Gio - van - ni e

*legato*

Gil - ia, Dey climb - a da hill - ia, dey climb - a da hill - ia, to

fet-cha to fet-cha to fet-cha boch-et-ta dell' a-qua, dell' a-qua, dell' a-qua.

Gio-van-ni fell don-a and broke his cor-on-a, Gio-van-ni fell don-a and

*p*

# JACK AND JILL

*half spoken*

broke his cor-on-a, Gio-van-ni fell don-a and broke his cor-on-a, E Gil-ia! Ah!

*f* *ff*

*Cadenza ad lib.*

Ah! Ah! Ah!

Ah! Ah!

*f* *f*

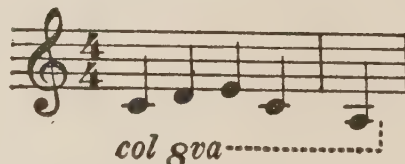
Came tum - bling af-ter.

# JACK AND JILL

## THE WAGNERIAN VERSION

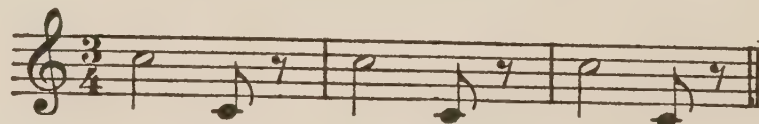
Richard Wagner would be sure to take "Jack and Jill" very seriously. To him Jack represents the superman (*Ueberschensch*) striving ever onward and upward, with Jill the eternal feminine (*das ewig Weibliche*) ever at his side, faithful to the last. When the tragedy comes, and Jack falls down and breaks his crown, Jill, true to type, comes "tumbling after." It is splendid Wagnerian drama in every way.

Naturally Wagner must have a "motif" for each of his characters, for he always makes use of such short patterns of melody to label the personages and episodes of his greater operas. For Jack he requires a courageous motif, sturdy and masculine, and he finds it in that good old song, "Johnny Get Your Gun."



This short phrase gives him an ideal "Jack motif."

For Jill he must use something correspondingly feminine, and the simple repetition of two tones, an octave apart, sufficiently suggests the eternal cooing of the female.



(Wagner may have derived this musical thought from the sound of the baby seal calling its mother. Try it, with the repeated word "mamma" as a text.)

With the two motifs definitely planted, the Wagnerian version of "Jack and Jill" quickly and easily grows into a stunning bit of dramatic declamation. Wagner always wrote his own words, using a highly alliterative German, in

## JACK AND JILL

which all the important syllables of each line began with the same consonant. (And this was comparatively simple, because the German language is full of consonants.)

So long as the motifs come out clearly in the accompaniment, and the alliteration is explosively emphasized, it doesn't matter much what the singer sings. In fact it is only necessary for him or her to sing louder than the orchestra can play.

In performing this Wagnerian version of "Jack and Jill," try to get the peculiar goat-like quality of the German tenor voice, but be as noisy about it as you wish. The German words really make sense of a sort, and if you don't know the pronunciation, anyone even slightly familiar with the language can set you straight. The "Ho-yo-to-ho" at the end is a direct quotation from "Die Walküre" and should finish with a shout. Don't be half-hearted about this. Remember, Wagner is Wagner, and a good performance should be heard at least two blocks away.

(Shouted) Hans und Hila, hehr und heiter den Hügel hinan!

The first system of the musical score is for the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, starting with a rest for the first measure, then a series of eighth notes with triplet markings. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, starting with a forte (f) dynamic and a series of eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'col 8va'.

Woll - ten Wasser zum waschen, wogende Wellen!

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, starting with a rest for the first measure, then a series of eighth notes with triplet markings. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, starting with a forte (f) dynamic and a series of eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'col 8va'.

# JACK AND JILL

Krach! ging der Kopf des Hänschen kaput, kolossal! Und Hila fiel

heftig herunter, hilflos dahinter! Ho-yo to ho! — (shout)

*col 8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *col 8va* *ff*

## THE MODERN FRENCH VERSION

Such a composer as Debussy might find in "Jack and Jill" the material for a gently atmospheric, impressionistic song, rather incoherent in melody and harmony, starting nowhere in particular and ending the same way. This French version should be sung in a rather plaintive style, vaguely and gropingly, if you know what we mean.

*p*

Jacques et Jille — went up ze hille, to

## JACK AND JILL

fetch a pail of wa-ter. Jacques fell down —

— and brokelis crown, — Et Jille tom - bait a - près, c'est vrai, c'est vrai.

### THE JAZZ VERSION

Finally, "Jack and Jill" must appear in the up-to-date American jazz form, to which all tunes come sooner or later. (Too often that is the first way the public discovers them for itself.) This jazz version really assumes a "team," one to ask the questions, the other to answer them. In the middle of the chorus, there must of course be a "Blues," so this final example of composition necessarily includes "The Jack and Jill Blues."

In presenting this to an audience, be sure to emphasize the individual voices of the team. The first is always rather nonchalantly pensive, while the second shows an eager and somewhat naive interest in the story. When the question, "What, water?" is answered, "I said water, yes, water," there

## JACK AND JILL

should be a touch of sadness in the facial expression and a slight suggestion of yearning in the up-turned eyes.

The "Blues," of course, must be sung in a melancholy fashion. Bring out the piano part strongly after "Twilight falling soon," so that your hearers will know it really is falling. Pronounce "choose," "chee-use," and be very plaintive at the close, with the "blue" harmony emphasized in the bass. The repeat of the first part should be brisk and snappy.



Jack \* (Jack who?) and Jill (what Jill?) went up, I said they went up— a

*col gva.....etc.*

A musical score for the first line of lyrics. It features a vocal line with notes corresponding to the words and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

hill (what the bill! some hill!) To fetch (what did they fetch?) a pail. of

A musical score for the second line of lyrics. It continues the vocal and piano parts from the previous section.

\* The words in parentheses are to be spoken, not sung.

# JACK AND JILL

wa-ter, (*what water?*) I said wa-ter, yes wa-ter. Jack (*what did he do?*) fell

down (*Oh dear!*) and broke, I said he broke his — crown, and

Jill (*more bad news?*) came tumb - ling af - ter (*after what?*) just

*col gva* *col gva*

af - ter! (*Blues!*) Fall-ing in the morn-ing, in the af - ter-noon,-

# JACK AND JILL

Fall-ing in - to sup-per,—

The first system of the musical score for 'Jack and Jill'. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment is written for both treble and bass staves. The lyrics 'Fall-ing in - to sup-per,—' are aligned with the vocal melody.

Twilight fall - ing soon.—

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'Twilight fall - ing soon.—'. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Ev-ry-bod-y fall-ing,—      noth - ing to choose —

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line features the lyrics 'Ev-ry-bod-y fall-ing,—' followed by a short rest and then 'noth - ing to choose —'. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady rhythm.

Be-cause I've got those dog - goned fall - ing Jack and Jill blues!—

The fourth system of the musical score. The vocal line sings 'Be-cause I've got those dog - goned fall - ing Jack and Jill blues!—'. The piano accompaniment includes some syncopated rhythms and chordal textures.

Oh af - ter.      *Fine*

2nd ending

D.C.

The fifth and final system of the musical score. It includes a '2nd ending' section marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The vocal line concludes with 'Oh af - ter.' and the word 'Fine' at the end of the system. The piano accompaniment ends with a double bar line and a 'D.C.' (Da Capo) instruction.

HALLEUJAH, BANANAS!



## II.

### HALLEUJAH, BANANAS!


It is no longer news that practically all of the popular song hits of recent years have been borrowed, consciously or unconsciously, from the successful music of the past. Our old friend (or enemy) "Yes, we have no Bananas," is perhaps the most complete and extraordinary specimen of melody-plagiarism on record.

This curiously tawdry-sounding chorus, cheap and trivial as it appears, actually possesses a most distinguished ancestry, for it has been assembled from no less than four separate and distinct sources.

For their starting-point, the "composers" of "Yes, we have no Bananas" aimed high. They went to one of the greatest pieces of sacred music, Handel's oratorio, "The Messiah." The climax, the most solemn moment in this masterpiece, comes with the famous "Hallelujah Chorus," for which, by tradition, the audience always rises with the singers. The opening tones of the "Hallelujah Chorus"

are as follows:  —and  
Hal - le - lu - jah!

these are also the opening tones of "Yes, we have no Ba-  
nanas."



Yes, we have no ba - na - ñas! etc.

In other words, "Hallelujah, Bananas!" is really the open-

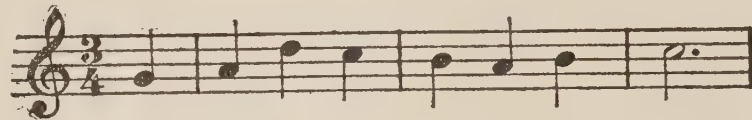
## HALLELUJAH, BANANAS!

ing of that popular chorus. This may seem shocking to some of us, but we have to admit that those composers were ambitious. They aimed high when they went to Handel's "Messiah" for a start.

And, having received this very good start, with the help of Mr. Handel, they went on with this phrase:



In the original waltz time it would be:



In other words, "O bring back my Bonnie to me," from "My Bonnie lies over the Ocean."

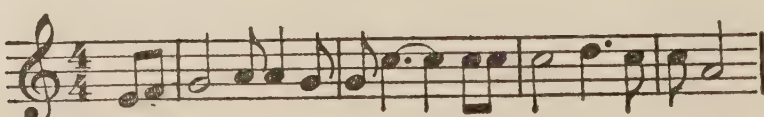
After that, they found a very good melody in the old opera "The Bohemian Girl," called "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls." The middle part goes like this:



It becomes: A single staff of music in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef. The melody consists of eight notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half), and D4 (half). The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Next they discovered a good old American tune, "Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party," also called "Seeing Nellie Home," and used likewise for another song, "An Old-Fashioned

Garden": A single staff of music in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef. The melody consists of eight notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half), and D4 (half). The key signature has one sharp (F#). This be-

comes: A single staff of music in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef. The melody consists of eight notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half), and D4 (half). The key signature has one sharp (F#). But:

## HALLELUJAH, BANANAS!



To complete the analysis, try singing the chorus of “Yes, we have no Bananas” with the old words instead of the new. In that case you find that the only addition to the original material is the word “bananas,” which, of course, is quite a contribution.

By freely adapting the former texts to the modern jazz version, you get the following conglomeration:

Hallelujah, Bananas!  
O bring back my Bonnie to me!  
I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,  
The kind that you seldom see.  
I was seeing Nellie home,  
To an old-fashioned garden.  
But, Hallelujah, Bananas!  
O bring back my Bonnie to me!

Try it on your piano, or even unaccompanied! You will be hailed as the Houdini of Harmony!



THE COMPLETE CONCERT PIANIST OR THE  
SEVEN AGES OF YANKEE DOODLE



### III.

## THE COMPLETE CONCERT PIANIST Or *THE SEVEN AGES OF YANKEE DOODLE*

It was in the old days at the National Arts Club, New York, when I happened to be a member of the Concert Committee. For one of our special events we had modestly announced "the greatest pianist in the world," and, as might have been expected, he backed out at the last minute.

We tried our best to find a substitute, but none was to be had. Finally, in desperation, I made a bold proposal to the committee. "Why not let *me* play?" was my suggestion.

"Are you the greatest pianist in the world?" they asked, with one, or nearly one, voice.

"No," said I, "but no one will know the difference."

"What can you play?" was the next question.

"I can play Yankee Doodle with one finger," came my ready reply.

They insisted that I do so, and when I did, they admitted it was good. In fact, it was perfect.

"But that will not make people think you are the greatest pianist in the world," they objected quite rightly. "You must play something classic, something in the old-fashioned, serious, dull style."

All too willing to oblige, I admitted that I could play the fine old "Yankee Doodle" chorale of Handel (sometimes known as "Now yank we all our Doodle") with its heavy chords in minor key, and its consistent atmosphere of ecclesiastical dignity.

"Play it," they said again, so I did,—like this:

# YANKEE DOODLE

The musical score for 'Yankee Doodle' is presented in four systems of piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Largo' and the time signature is 4/4. The key signature is G major, indicated by one sharp (F#). The first system begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system is marked piano (*p*). The third system is marked crescendo (*cresc.*). The fourth system is marked forte (*f*) and fortissimo (*ff*). The score is written for piano, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a brace on the left. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, while the bass clef provides a steady accompaniment.

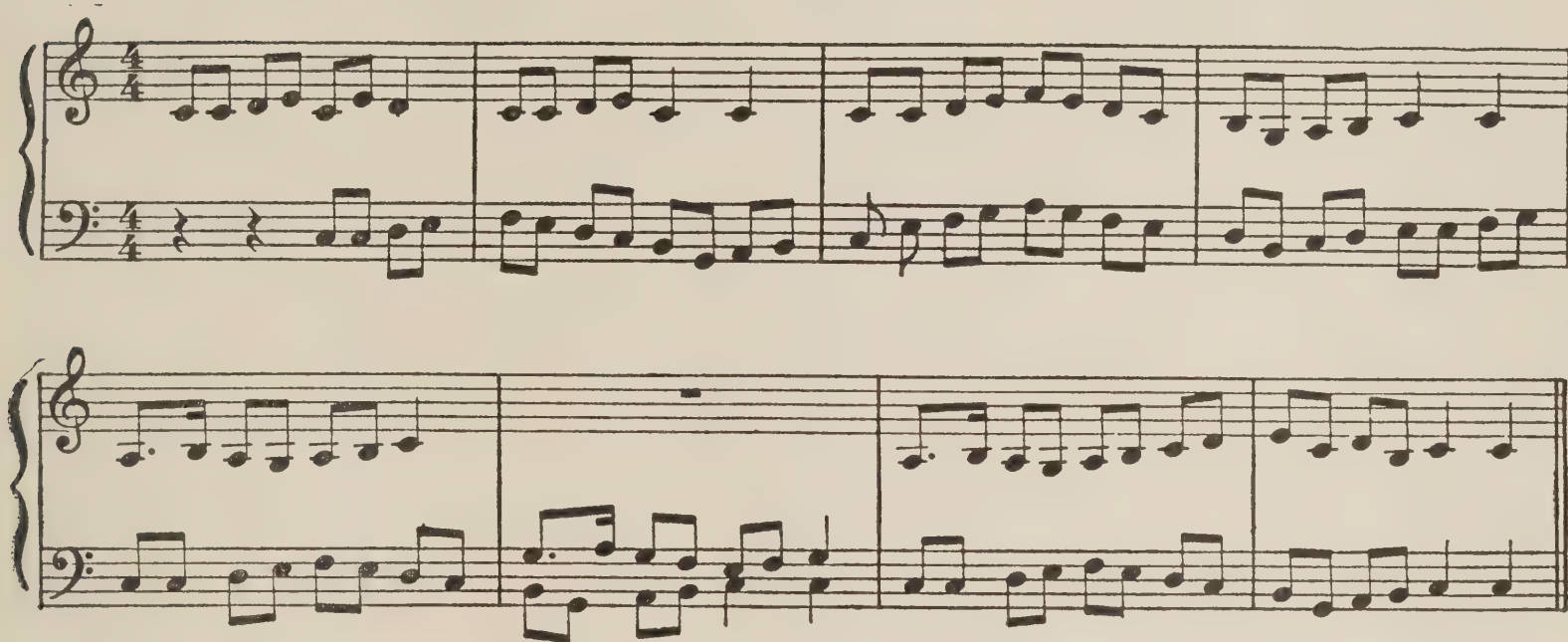
Again they admitted it was all right, but again there were exacting demands. "If you play the classics," said one member, "you are always expected to play something by Bach."

"And quite right too," was my well-tempered reply. "I happen to remember a little thing by Bach which he wrote when he was only five years old. In fact it was given him as an exercise in counterpoint, while he was in school at

## YANKEE DOODLE

Eisenach. To the little fellow's honest delight, the melody proved to be 'Yankee Doodle,' and the least he could do with it, even at that tender age, was to make the second half of the tune harmonize with the first half in the manner of a primitive two-part invention. As a historical relic, it is most interesting."

"Play it!" they shouted, breathlessly, so I did,—like this:



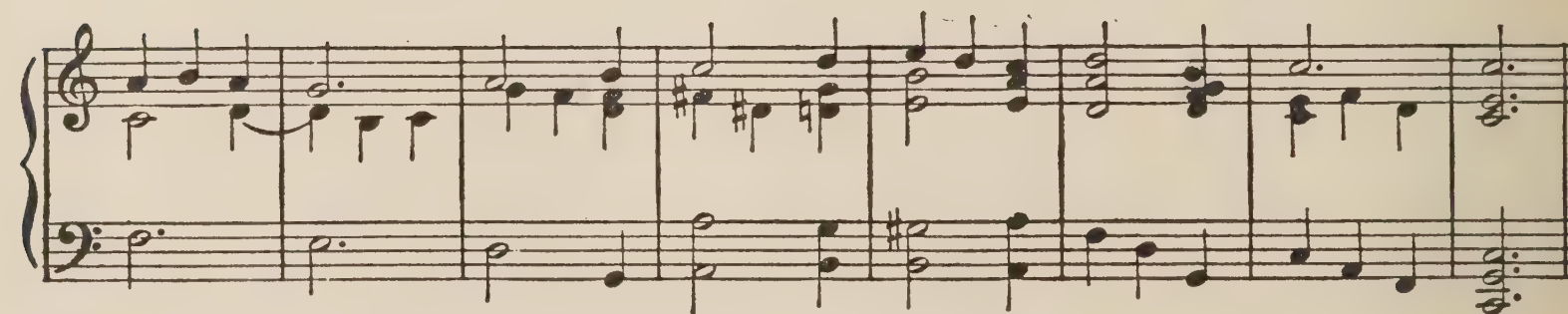
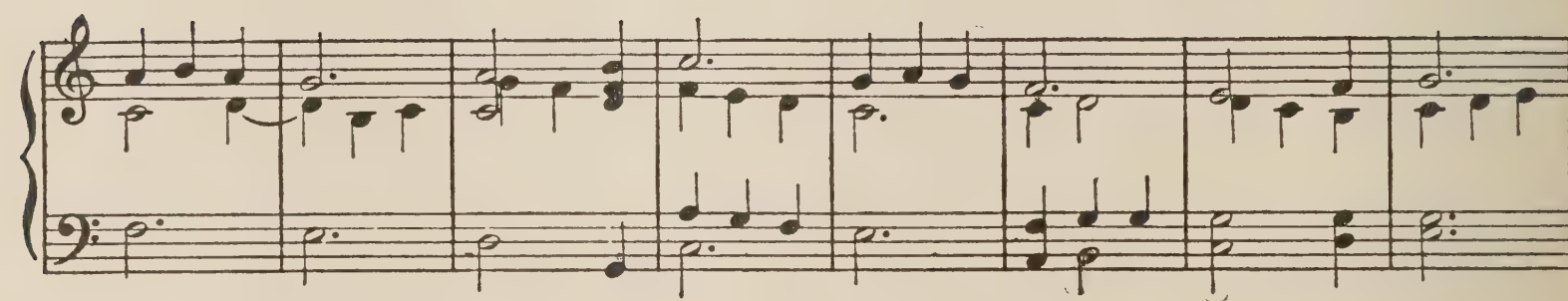
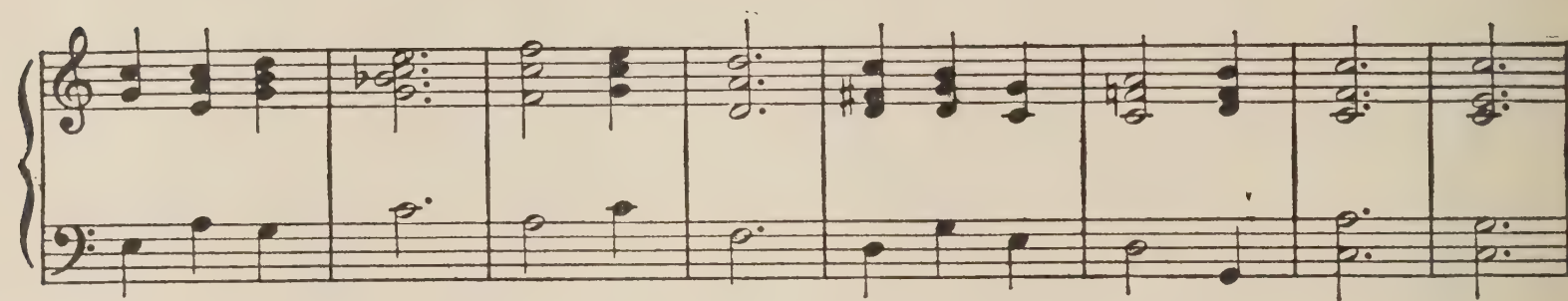
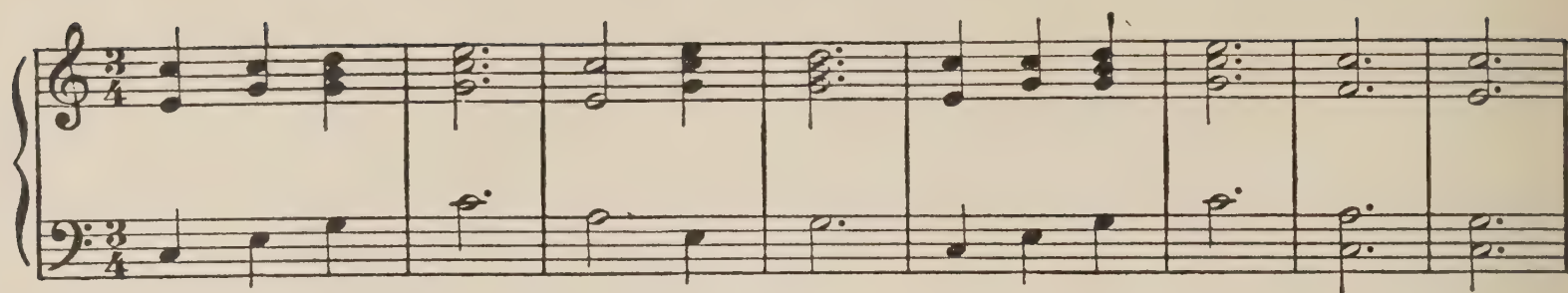
Approval was once more my portion, but the committee, now thoroughly aroused, strove for ever greater heights.

"Beethoven!" said someone, and a hush fell upon the group.

"Ah, you may well say 'Beethoven,' " I remarked, deliberately. "Of course, this great classic-romanticist must be included. I can play part of the slow movement of his famous 'Yankee Doodle' sonata, a very beautiful, chaste melody. The secret of its beauty lies in the rhythmic character of the music, which is in a slow triple time instead of the quick march-beat of the original. This change gives the melody a new accent and an entirely original effect."

"Play it," they breathed, so I did—like this:

## YANKEE DOODLE



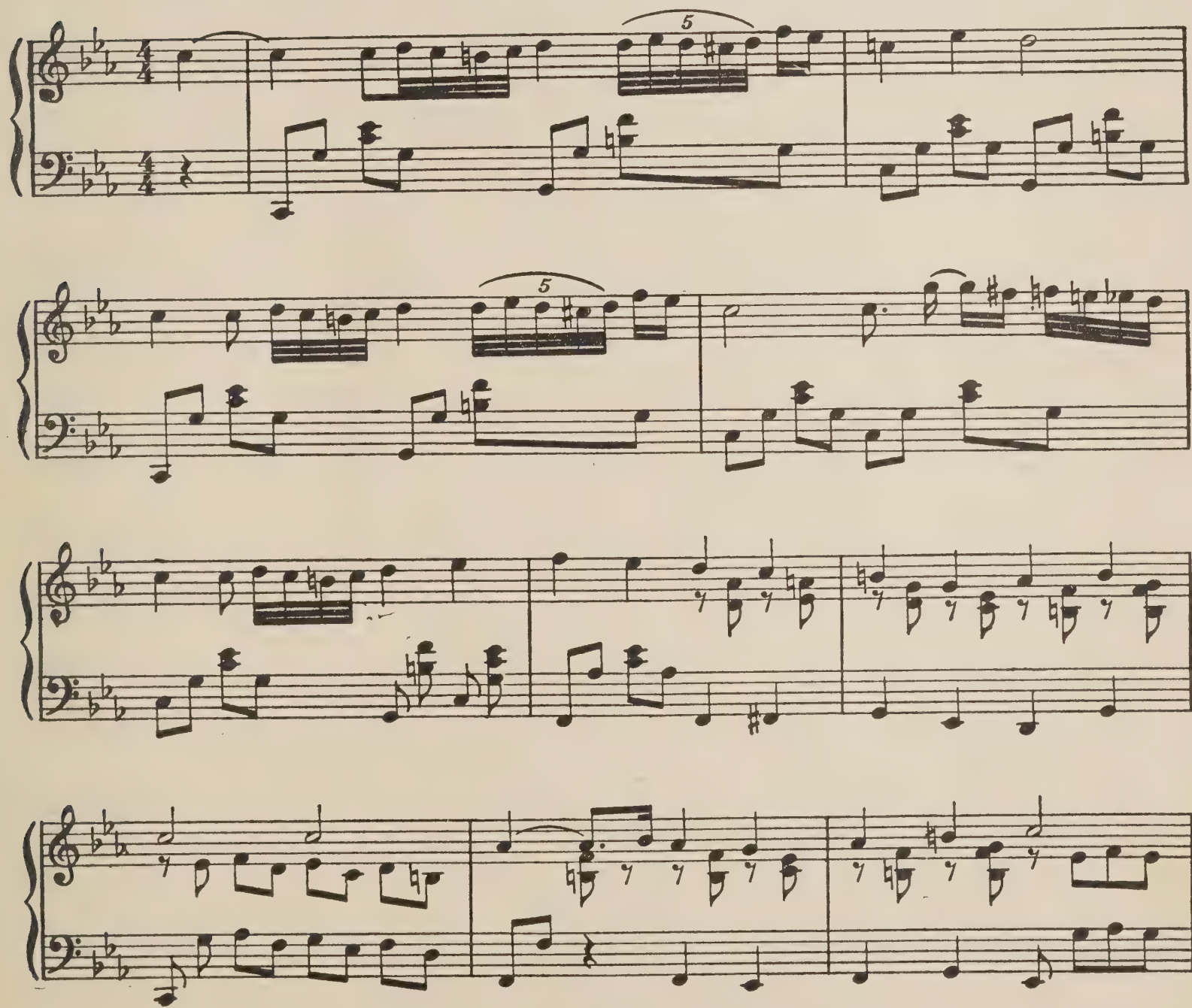
By this time my ability was well established, and I enjoyed my little hour of triumph. But the end was not yet.

“Nobody ever heard of a piano program without Chopin on it,” said a rather sentimentally inclined member of the committee.

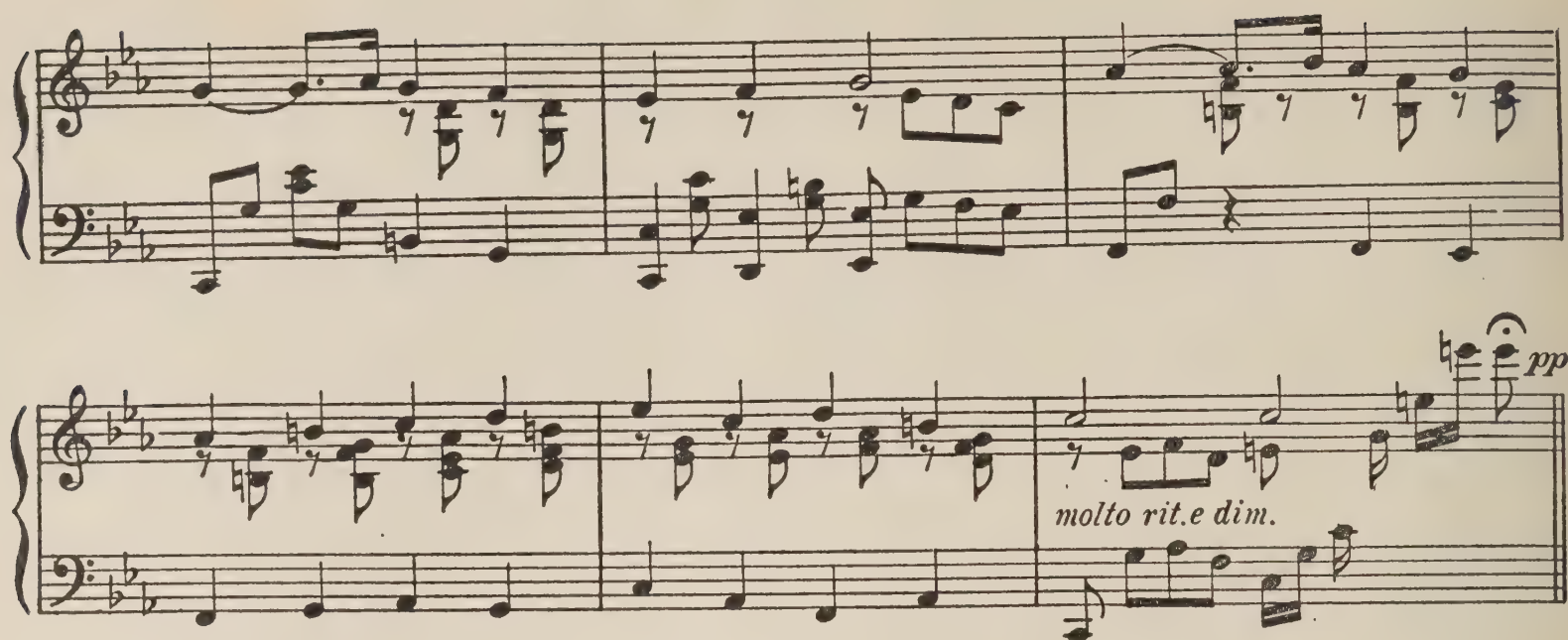
## YANKEE DOODLE

“‘The opposite Pole,’ I like to call him,” was my genial response. “Romance personified! What grace! What imagination! How different from the conventional composer! Permit me to play his little ‘Yankee Doodle’ Nocturne, a perfect example of his decorated style. The melody is in minor key, as it should be, and around it are clustered graceful trills and frills and furbelows. The gentle ending, in major key, is highly characteristic.”

Of course, I had to play it, so I did,—like this:



## YANKEE DOODLE

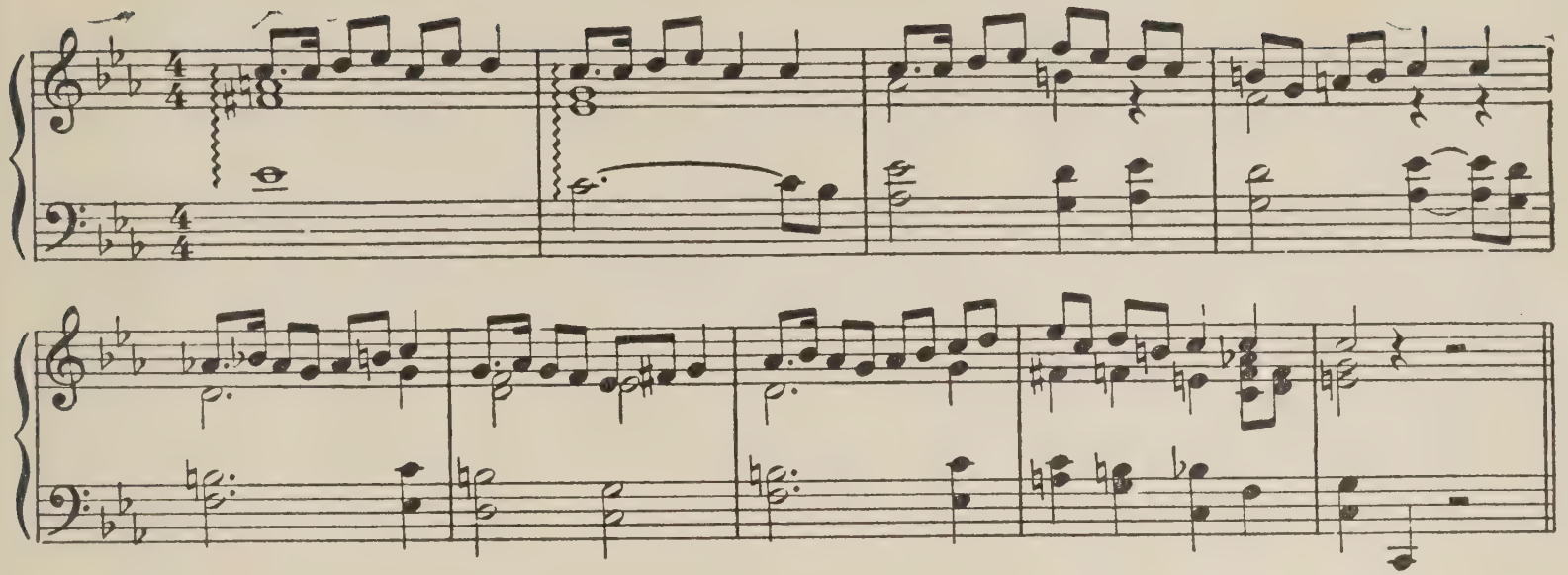


It was inevitable that the subject of American composers should come up next. "They always have *one* American composer on a program." (Why should there be only one?) "And that *one* is always MacDowell."

"Quite right, gentlemen," I agreed. "MacDowell should be represented, and if I have my way, he shall be. There is a charming little salon piece of his, 'To a Wild Yankee Doodle,' which has the great virtue of brevity, yet contains something of the composer's inner spirit. The mode is predominantly minor, and the harmonization has a touch of the exotic. But it is American music of which we can all be proud."

After that it was inevitable that I should play the little gem, so I did,—like this:

## YANKEE DOODLE



Eager hands were now thronging to press mine, but I was not satisfied. "Have I convinced you?" I asked, a trifle haughtily.

"You have," they gasped, almost in tears.

"Then let us complete the program. I suggest Tschaikowsky, Debussy and one operatic selection. *Pour le sport*," I added as an afterthought. The suggestion was welcomed with acclamation.

"Tschaikowsky, the morbid," I pondered aloud, "friend of Nadeshda von Meck, and immortalized by that best of biographers, his brother Modest. What can I play that will do this great Russian justice? I think it should be a bit of his Pathetic Yankee Doodle Symphony, that gloomy outpouring of an introspective nature. It is written in the irregular five-four time (he gives us an introductory measure to establish the rhythm) and of course in minor key. The closing, halting strains reiterate the hopelessness of all human endeavor."

And so it proved. For Tschaikowsky's symphonic inspiration was played like this:

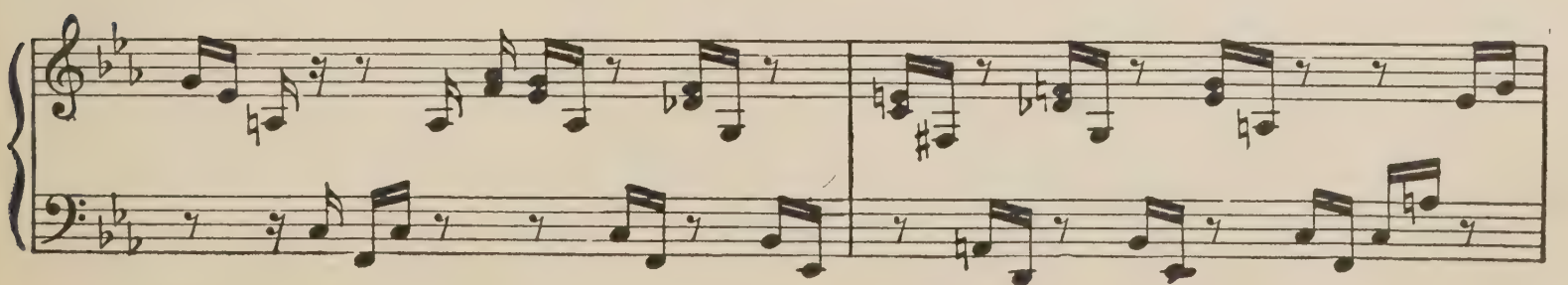
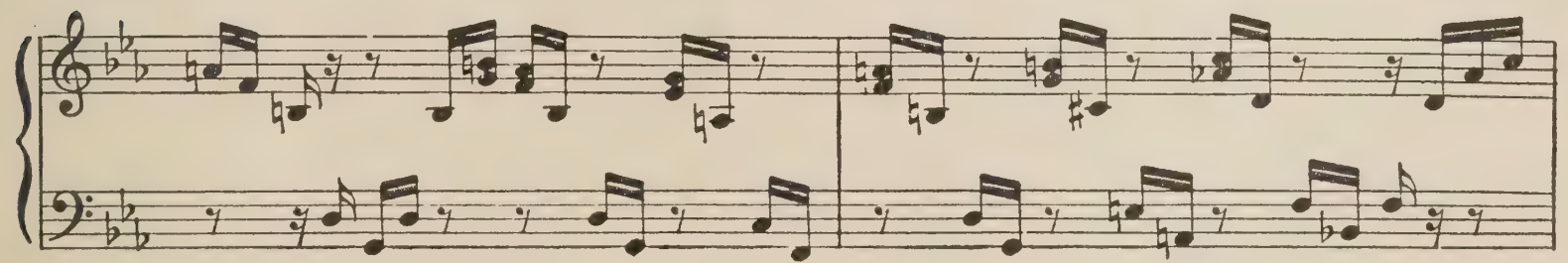
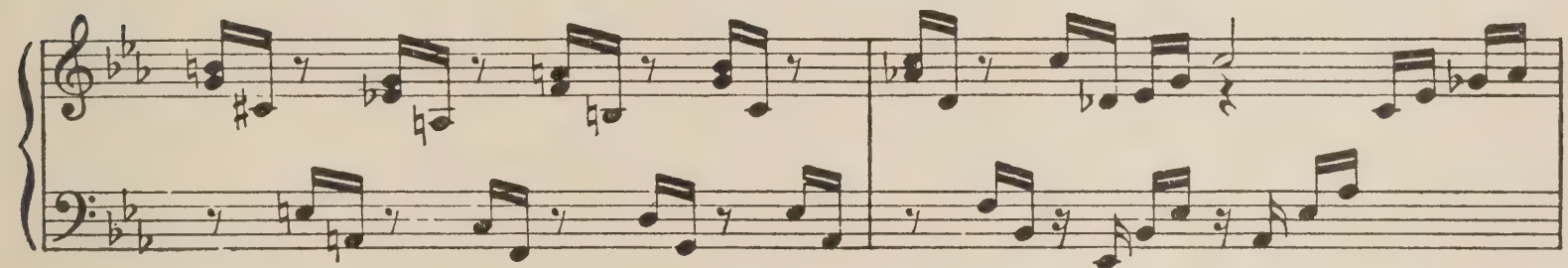
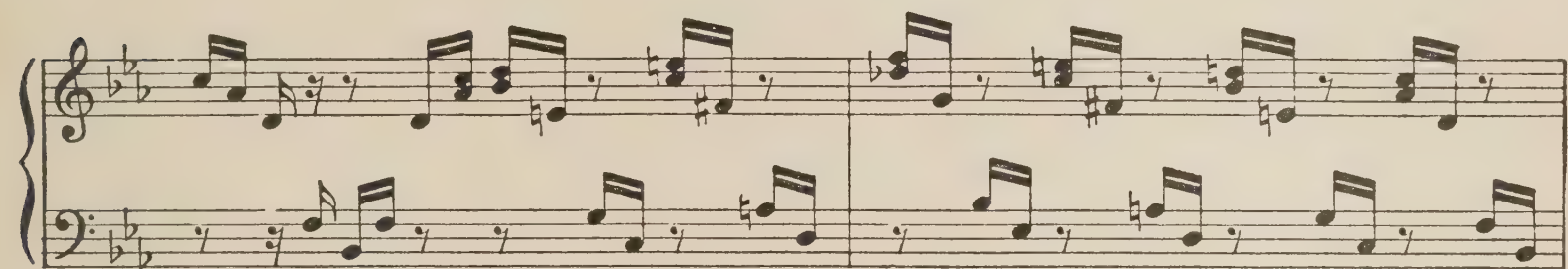
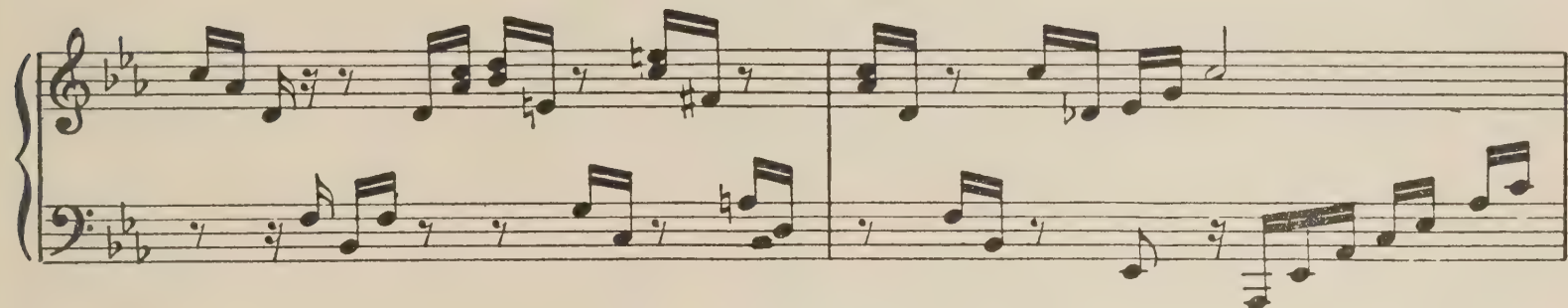
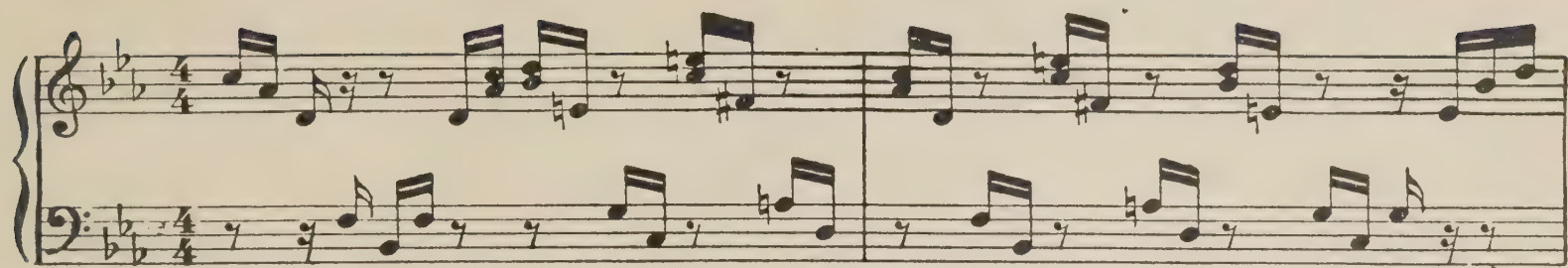
# YANKEE DOODLE

The musical score for 'Yankee Doodle' is presented in four systems. The first system begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 5/4 time signature. The melody starts with a whole rest, followed by a series of chords. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note arpeggio. The second system continues the melody and arpeggio. The third system shows the melody moving through various chords, with the arpeggio continuing. The fourth system concludes the piece with a final chord and a whole rest, marked with dynamic instructions: *dim.*, *p*, and *pp*.

Debussy was not a difficult composer to introduce. He never is. I was sure of the potential popularity of his "Yanquée d'Oudle" Arabesque, which produces through the "whole tone scale" a series of chords of the ninth and breaks them up into characteristic arpeggio effects. The modern atmosphere is inescapable, in spite of the simple character of the melody.

I played it,—like this:

# YANKEE DOODLE



## YANKEE DOODLE



The operatic finale was frankly a sop to a sensation-loving public. To my mind opera has no place on a concert program, particularly a piano recital, but there are so many who think of music only in terms of the diamond horse-shoe, that their interest is worth a little catering service.

Puccini was my selection among modern operatic composers, and I offered a short medley from his Jap-Belasconese melodrama, "Madama Yanki Doo." The harmonies are typical, and the little interlude where Yanki Doo is watching for the return of the Spirit of '76 is most poignant. The bang-up chord at the finish indicates her successful suicide.

The potpourri was played like this:

# YANKEE DOODLE

Lento

The musical score for 'Yankee Doodle' is presented in four systems. The first system begins in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time, marked 'Lento'. It features a melody in the treble and a bass line in the bass. A key signature change to one flat (F major) occurs in the fourth measure. The second system continues the piece, maintaining the 3/4 time and Lento tempo. The third system shows a consistent eighth-note accompaniment in the bass. The fourth system concludes with a key signature change to two flats (B-flat major) and an 'agit.' (agitato) marking, indicating a change in tempo or mood.



THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA



#### IV.

### THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

It has long been recognized that there will some day be a great American opera. But when? That is the difficult question.

Everyone knows what should enter into the ideal American opera. It must in the first place represent the throbbing restlessness of modern business life. It must have a practical contact with conditions as they really are. Perhaps a touch of jazz here and there will do no harm.

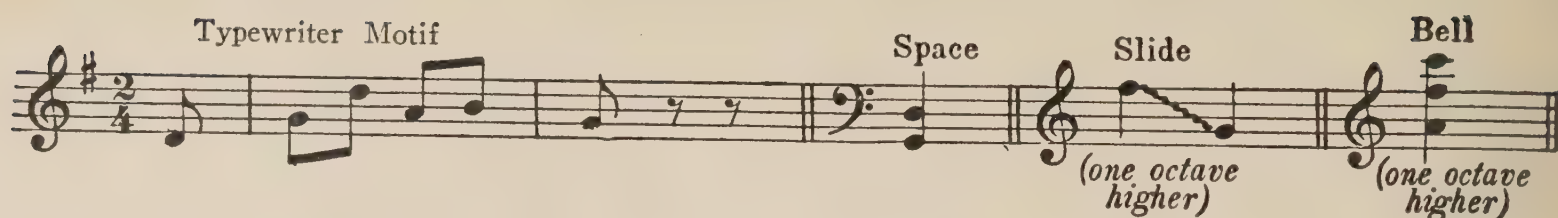
Love interest is essential, of course, but in the background there must be a reminder of those folk influences which have helped to create the American music of to-day, the Negro, the Indian and perhaps the Creole.

Patriotism should enter into the picture, and if we can amuse the tired business man here and there, so much the better. A bit of humor, a bit of pathos, a bit of tragedy, they are all a part of this helter-skelter existence of ours, and they are all needed if the great American opera is to be a success.

Here, therefore, are some suggestions as to the construction of such an opera. They are offered for what they are worth, with the knowledge that Mr. Otto Kahn will not use them without asking permission. A good title would be "Neuralgia, or More Luck than Management."

The scene opens in a New York business office. Mr. A. Lipstick, of Lipstick and Glass, is dictating to his stenographer, who takes it directly on the typewriter (with a musical accompaniment).

# THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA



B. Shlifsky,  
Shlifsky & Schmalz, Retailers,  
Attention Mr. Shlifsky,  
DEAR MR. SHLIFSKY,

Yours of the nineteenth received—and contents noted. Period.  
In reply would say that we cannot fill your esteemed order even  
though you are offering us twice as much as our regular quotation  
on these goods. Period. Paragraph.

Our reason for this action is that we do not approve of your  
methods of doing business with the ultimate consumer. Period.  
We believe that the American citizen should have—quote—"a square  
deal"—unquote. Period. Paragraph.

While your business would undoubtedly be a nice addition to our  
volume at this time, comma, we think we have made our position  
sufficiently clear, comma, which is—quote—"Morals first. Period.  
Let your conscience be your guide"—unquote. Period. Paragraph.

Trusting that this will be a lesson to you and with kindest personal  
regards,

Very truly yours,  
LIPSTICK & GLASS,

By: A. Lipstick.

Thus we have at the outset the necessary element of Amer-  
ican business, with B. Shlifsky immediately branded as a  
villain of the deepest dye. Shlifsky, on receipt of A. Lip-  
stick's letter, plans a dastardly revenge for the insult, namely  
to capture Lipstick's beautiful daughter, Neuralgia.\*

\* By a curious co-incidence this is also the name of the heroine of that immortal ballad,  
"Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl."

## THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

The scene changes to the boudoir of Neuralgia Lipstick, and the heroine is introduced with a clean but snappy song:

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "I glo - ri - fy the A - mer - i - can girl, — The A - mer - i - can girl — sets 'their heads in a whirl — etc." The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a more melodic treble line with some syncopation.

I glo - ri - fy the A - mer - i - can girl, — The A -  
mer - i - can girl — sets 'their heads in a whirl — etc.

This gives her a chance to do some acrobatic dancing and finally to bring on a chorus representing Faith, Hope, Charity, Youth, Purity, Civic Virtue, The Skin You Love to Touch and That Schoolgirl Complexion.

After this chorus, with appropriate specialties, you hear in the distance, say about 42nd St. and Lexington Ave., a quartet of plantation Negroes, for Neuralgia's home is in the sunny South. They sing:

# THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

TENOR I  
TENOR II

BASS I  
BASS II

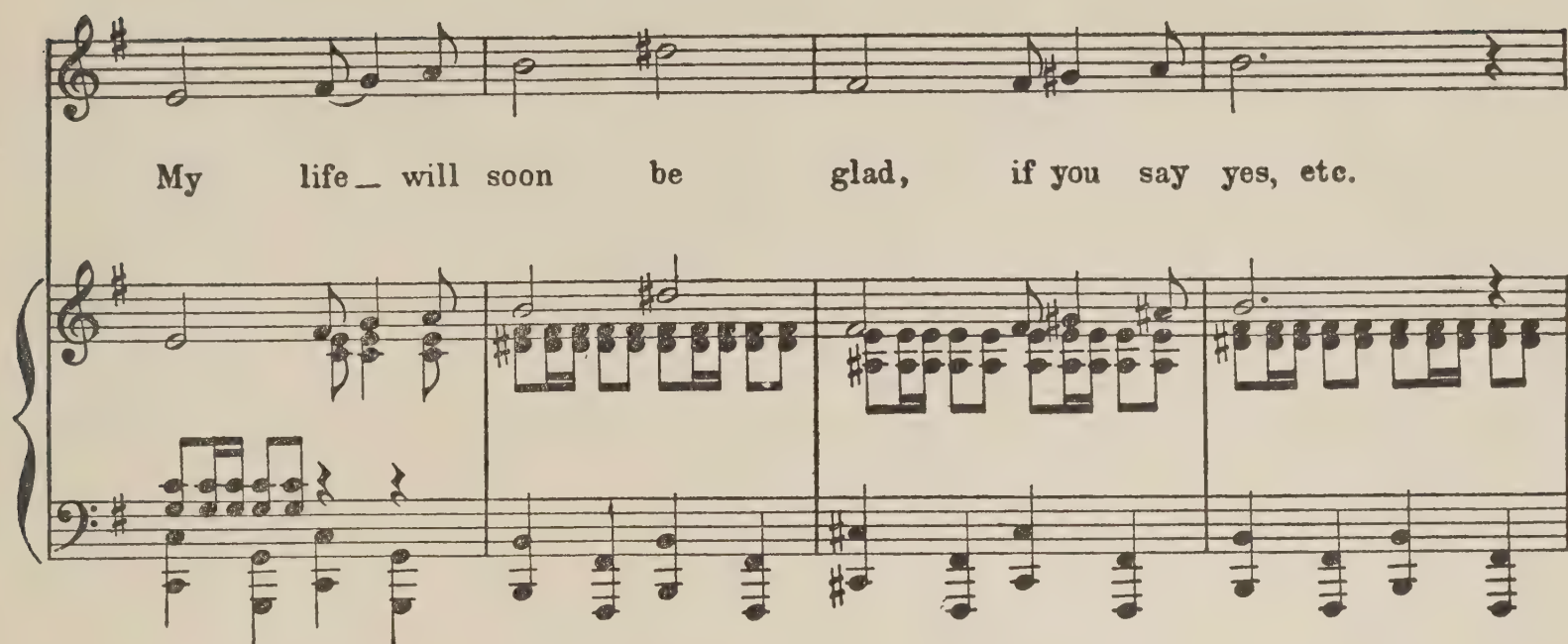
I want to be most an - y - where ex - cep - tin' where I  
am. It seems to me that here and there some - one should give at - tention to [the matter]

This introduces the necessary Negro atmosphere, and at the same time gives the audience some delightful harmony of the barber-shop type. If necessary, the Negroes can be brought on to do a double Charleston.

At this point the love interest should be indicated, and this can be done by the entrance of the hero, whose name is Jones, and he sings as follows:

I'm al-ways so lone - ly, I want - you on - ly,

## THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

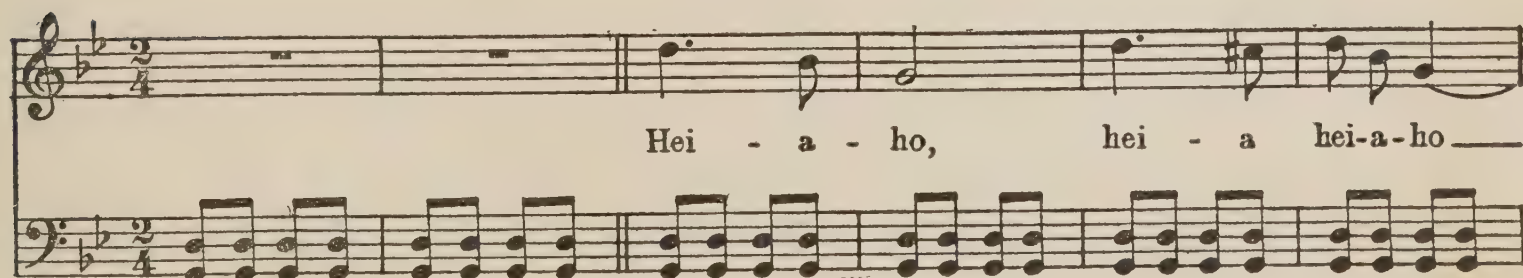


My life — will soon be glad, if you say yes, etc.

The musical score consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and contains the lyrics "My life — will soon be glad, if you say yes, etc." The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a bass line that includes some chromatic movement.

This song, to a fox-trot version of "Celeste Aida," is a timely reminder of the relationship between America's new music and that of the Old World. Also it leads logically to the kidnapping of Neuralgia by the villainous rival, B. Shlifskey.

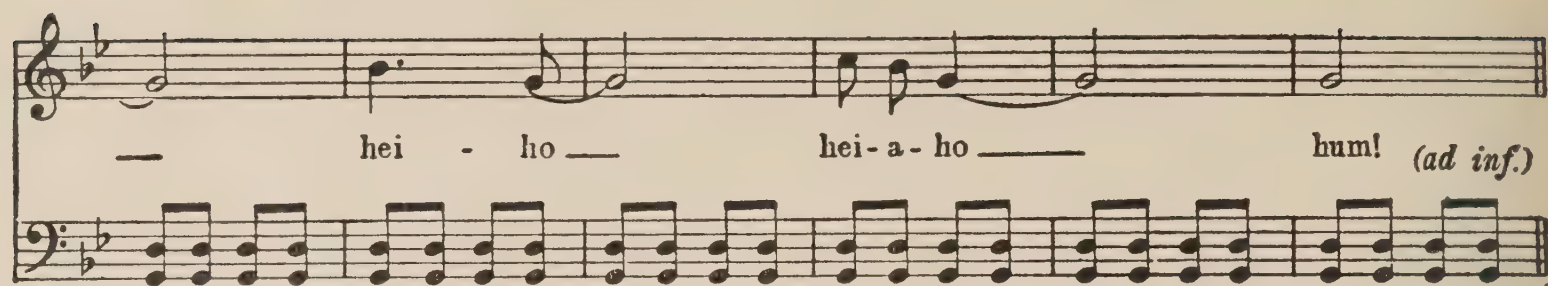
He secretes her in an Indian encampment in the wide open spaces, and this gives a wonderful opportunity for a study of the red man's life in song and story. Characteristically enough, we first hear a war dance, for these children of nature have never been tamed. Circling around the totem pole, marked with the Indian Stop-Go hieroglyphics, the warriors chant their endless burden to the monotonous beat of the tom-tom:



Hei - a - ho, hei - a hei-a-ho —

The musical score is for a chant in 2/4 time, featuring a treble and bass staff. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The vocal line is on the treble staff, starting with a whole rest followed by a half note, then a quarter note, and ending with a half note. The piano accompaniment is on the bass staff, consisting of a continuous eighth-note pattern. The lyrics "Hei - a - ho, hei - a hei-a-ho —" are written below the vocal line.

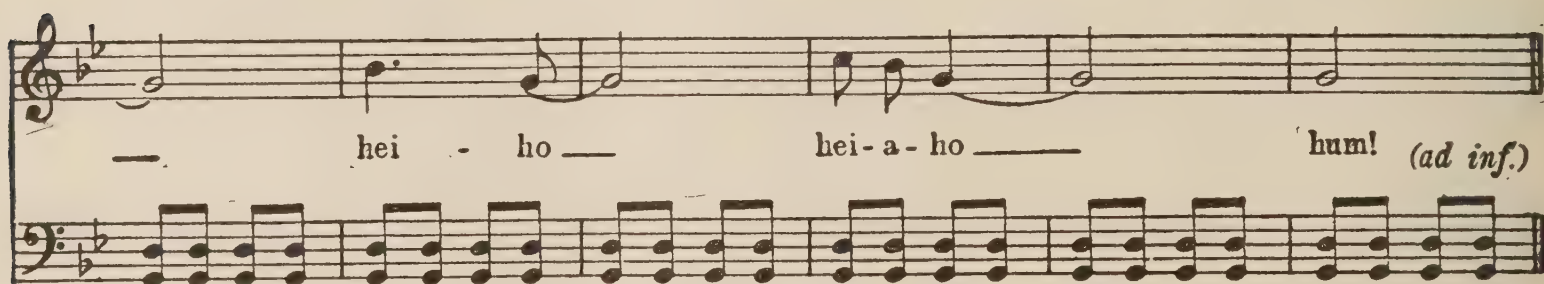
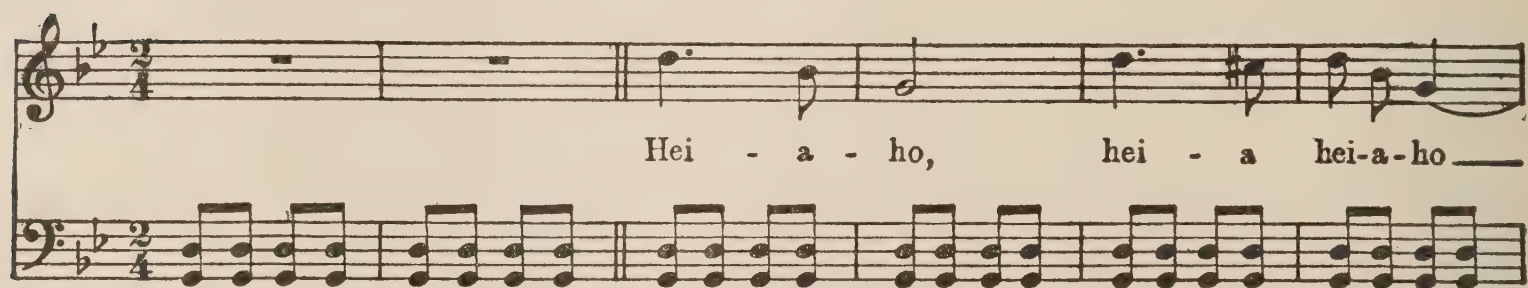
# THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA



This may be freely translated as follows:

Sharpen tomahawk, good-bye, teepee,  
Farewell wigwam, war-cry is calling.  
Many scalps waiting for tomahawk.  
Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

Out on the outskirts of the Indian village a lonely squaw  
sits and rocks her baby to sleep, gently patting her tom-tom  
the while. And this is her song:

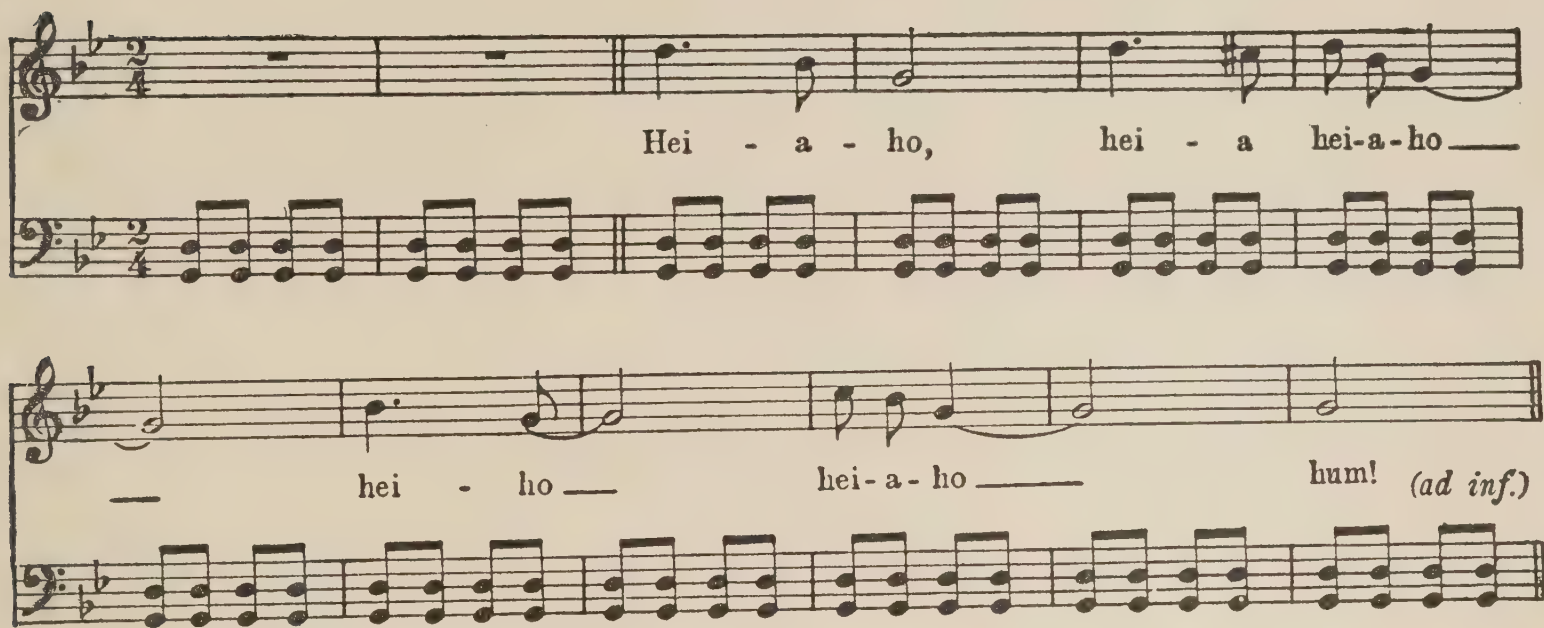


Freely translated, this means:

Sleep, little papoose, sleep now.  
Great Bear is in sky.  
Big Elk is in clubhouse.  
Much wampum in Manhattan.  
Sleep, little papoose, sleep now.

## THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

Simultaneously, out in the virgin forest, an Indian lover is playing the flute and singing to his beloved, at the same time filling her tom-tom with grain and sweetmeats. And this is his song:



A free translation of this would read as follows:

Lovely moonflower, smelling so sweet,  
Gifts of love with my heart I bring.  
Blanket and moccasin and much sweet corn.  
Warrior wants moonflower be his squaw.

Very simple and direct, all this, and a beautiful touch of the aboriginal, without which no American opera could get along.

The plot is now resumed, and B. Shlifskey makes his appearance, in a desperate attempt to win the love of Neuralgia. For this purpose he disguises himself as a Spaniard, or perhaps a Creole Praline, and serenades our heroine in the following terms:

# THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

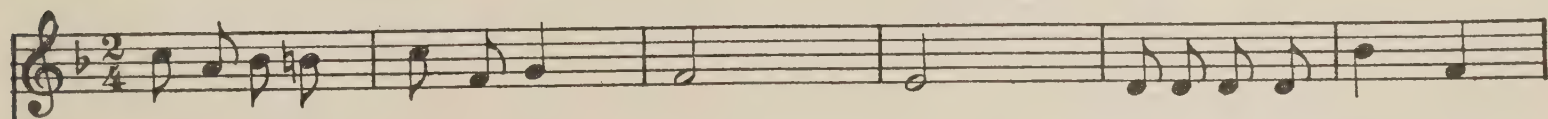
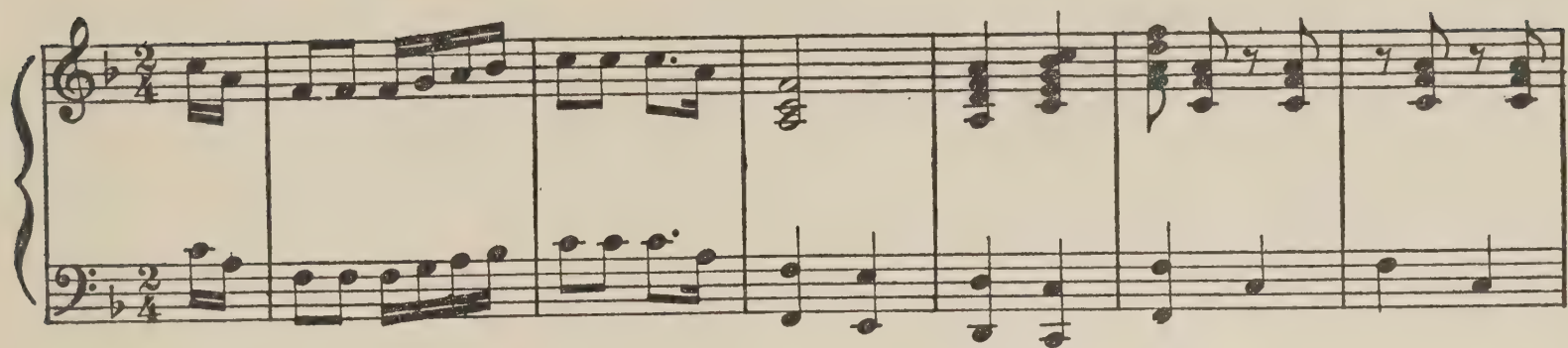
Ah my sweet-est Neur - al - gia — What a won - der - ful  
 Don't you hear my gui - tar, ha? — I have loved from a -

gal - gia! — I would fain be your pal - gia, — but you say me nay nay.  
 far, ha! — most di - vine shooting star, ha! — please don't send me a - way!

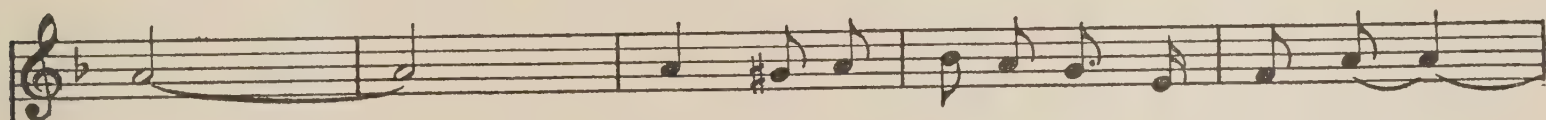
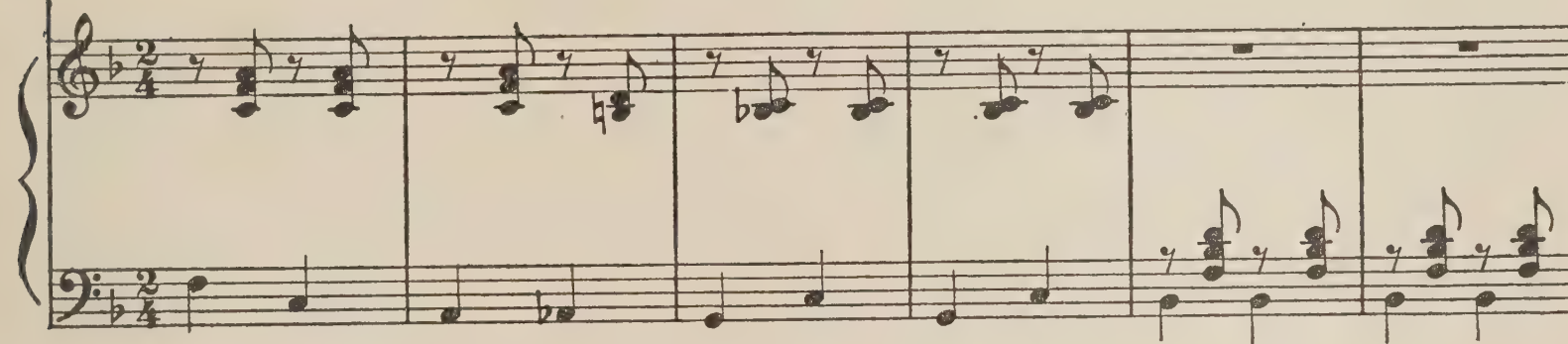
These tender sentiments almost soften the heart of the heroine, but she remembers her father's admonition, and also Mr. Jones, and repulses Shlifsky. This brings the opera to a climax. The Indians prepare to torture Neuralgia at the command of the cruel Shlifsky, and it seems that nothing can save her. But right here a novelty can be introduced. In the distance a bugle is heard, and the gradually increasing sound of galloping hoof-beats (cocoanut shells). Ere long the American uniform is seen through the dust, and a troop of soldiers dashes on the stage, with Jones at the head. This, of course, relieves the situation, and permits the patriotic Finale, in which all the characters join, spelling out the name of America in word and action.\*

\* Chief credit for this alphabetic inspiration belongs to Messrs. Bert Kalmer and Harry Ruby, and various versions have already been privately performed by Marc Connelly, Al Hill and others.

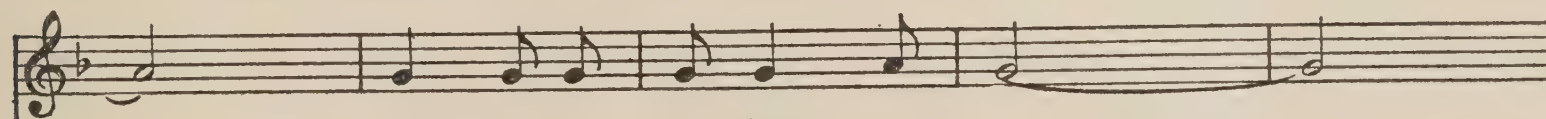
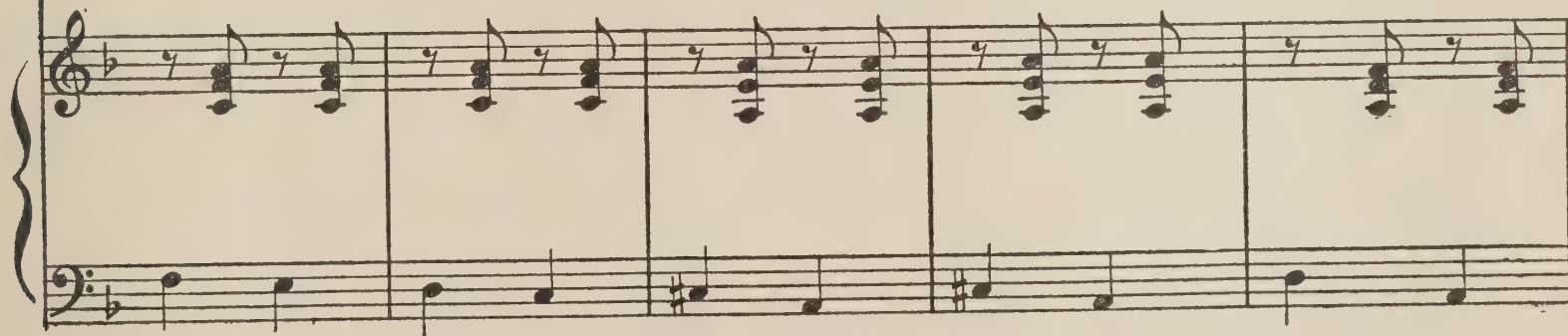
# THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA



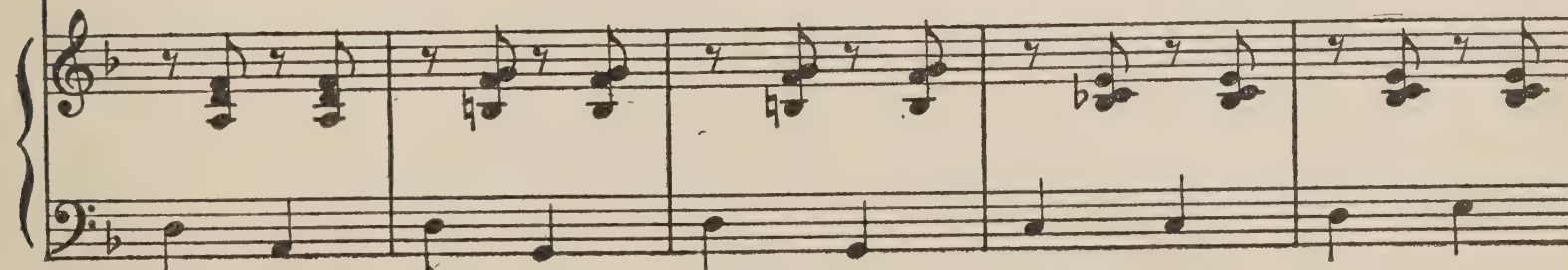
A is for our glo - ri - ous Na - vy, M is for the Boys in



'Blue, ————— E is the Sub-ma-rine De - tach - ment, —————



— R is the White House so true. —————



# THE GREAT AMERICAN OPERA

I is for our Pres-i - dent Coo - lidge, C is for the Flag we

The first system of the musical score. It features a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4-Bb4, quarter notes C5-Bb4, and a half note A4. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

love! \_\_\_\_\_ O A - M - E - R - I - C -

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a series of quarter notes: Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The piano accompaniment continues with chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

A Don't bite the knife that is feed - ing you. \_\_\_\_\_

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4-Bb4, quarter notes C5-Bb4, and a half note A4. The piano accompaniment continues with chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The system ends with a long note in the vocal line and a chord in the piano accompaniment.

(with octave)

And that, my friends, is the germ of the great American opera.

THE END







